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# L E T T E R

TO THE

Rev<sup>d</sup>. J. Walker, F.T.C.D.

ON HIS

# S E R M O N

Preached on Sunday, July the 20th. at the

Penitentiary Chapel, Dorset-Street,  
on Revelations xvii. v. 14.

*" And they that were with him were called, and chosen, and faithful."*

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By JOHANNES CLERICUS.

*" And this Light they are so dazzled with, is nothing but an ignis fatuus, that leads them continually round in this circle. It is a Revelation, because they firmly believe it ; and they believe it, because it is a Revelation."*

LOCKE.

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D U B L I N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1794.



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# LETTER, &c.

S I R,

I N a variety of conversations held with men of sense and letters, I was informed that you, and also some other gentlemen, held very strange and absurd Doctrines, which you have both publicly and privately endeavoured to cultivate ; to such reports, however, I paid but little attention, until I had seen a letter from the Archbishop of Dublin to Dean Blundel, desiring you might not be permitted to preach in his church. This roused my attention, and I was resolved to hear for myself, which I did this very evening, and returned home well convinced of



the propriety of the Archbishop's prohibition : but if you have any strong reasons to advance in justification of your doctrines, I am still inclined to do you every justice, and to give you that opportunity, is the purpose of my present letter.

When we consider what an amazing difference the education and learning of St. Paul must have made between him and other apostles, that far from despising the gifts of nature and of art, he made use of all his talents in advancing the glorious cause which he had undertaken, it might be expected that a learned Fellow of the first University for literature in the world, would, in the capacity of an officiating clergyman have proved himself to be an ornament to Religion——But unaccountable indeed it is, that the reverse has been too manifest in you ; and I am sorry to say, that from your performance this day, it could never be judged by any person that you had ever been versant in the writings of *QUINTILIAN*, *CICERO*, *LONGINUS*, the works of the Augustine age, or men of genius in the present. To hear the sublime Liturgy of the church read in a canting ignorant manner—  
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to see grimace and tautological repetitions substituted in lieu of preaching, was at once disgusting and ridiculous—but above all to hear Doctrines uttered which have been long exploded by men of letters, as injurious to society ; and in a Chapel dedicated to a noble and laudable purpose, should call on society for redress.

Your text was taken out of a very obscure part of the Revelations, where you could find no assistance either from the preceding or subsequent words, of elucidating the expressions of “ *Called, Chosen, Faithful,*” further than in general terms, which might denote the assembly of the just. But you have arbitrarily fix’d the meaning of those words to some strange ideas of your own, which you have not attempted to explain, yet you would force them on the implicit assent of your hearers. You say the word *called*, in its limited and most essential meaning implies a call which the sinner cannot resist, and whereby he is converted : if so, this is indeed a proof of his being chosen or elected in preference to others ; and again you maintain that such a person cannot finally be cast away. With respect to the first so essential

to happiness, you have not defined it. Is it a voice from heaven speaking to the sinner in distinct language? Is it a powerful and instantaneous unspeakable operation of the divine Spirit on the soul, by which the sinner knows that he is at that very *moment* or *instant* the adopted heir of Glory : It may be inferred from your language, that the sinner is conscious of having received this Call—you say, that you yourself have received it ; and have solemnly appealed to Heaven, that you never would have received it, were it not irresistible. You then, Sir, can explain it better than others, or you may evasively answer : “ *the wind bloweth where it listeth,*” but we must not suffer you to place yourself on a footing with the apostles, and to waft about your own chimera’s with the same confidence as the apostles, who were miraculously supported for the establishment of the gospel, and who maintained truth. If you have no miracles to support you, where are your reasons ? Reason must perhaps, be secluded to make room for implicit Faith ; this seems most evidently to be the case ; but if not, I am confident that your great abilities will prove that I have been mistaken, and if so, I shall be your most sanguine

sanguine advocate, and most openly confess the folly of my opposition, but glory in the wisdom of the enquiry. If out of the mouths of Babes and Sucklings God has ordained praise, how much more may it be expected from the mouth of a learned Fellow of Trinity College! who being called of God by "irresistible power, like Paul of Tarsus, should be able to silence an Arreopagus of Philosophers." Sir, I am extremely concerned to think it possible for a gentleman of your literary abilities and sincere heart, to hold forth a doctrine, which in my humble opinion, represents religion in the most unamiable and shocking point of view. Has the Almighty formed mankind with a predestinated partiality? with a fixt and determined resolution, to make one part unconditionally his chosen people, and to abandon the rest to everlasting misery? these conclusions naturally follow from your assertions. You have publicly declared that a man, in order to salvation, must experience a particular and powerful *call*, which will render him willing, and become effectual to his conversion. That man himself has no more to do in this change than the world had in its creation. Sir, did I mistake your assertions, or not?

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if not, I should be happy to find you capable of solving the objections to which such doctrine is liable ; it imputes to God cruelty, and partiality, makes *Him* the author of sin and illusion : of *cruelty*, and *partiality*, because he had predetermined to suffer a great part of the world to *perish*, when *he* could have prevented it ; the author of sin in as much as men must have sinned from necessity, where the *will* had not the power of resistance, or of seeking that power. Of illusion, for all are unexceptionally (in holy writ) invited to partake of salvation. An illusive invitation indeed, if fatal necessity were to consign any to sin and misery. How could the divine Being laugh at *their* calamity, or mock when *their* fear cometh, who had not been the authors of their own destruction ? Will you say with Paul, whose meaning you do not seem to understand, who hath resisted his will ? The answer is evident : he that obstinately refuses to be saved when he might. Who might ? All men. *For God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all men might be saved.* WHO THEN HATH RESISTED HIS WILL ? these are words which may better be quoted to prove that all men will be saved, than that  
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some are saved irresistibly : but as both positions cannot be true, both absolutely incompatible with the divine attributes, both are equally to be rejected.

There is scarcely any chapter in the Bible, so much perverted as the 9th of Romans ; the predilection of God for *Jacob* in preference to *Esau*, by which was represented the mercy of God shewn to the Gentiles, who received the gospel when it was rejected by the Jews. The love of God to Jacob was not on account of any merit in him above that of his brother, for this predilection was prior to the birth, and consequently the merit of either—but besides God who knoweth all things might have had reasons which he did not think expedient to reveal, for this preference, therefore it would be presumptuous to arraign his justice on the occasion—where we therefore are not able to discover any real meritorious difference, we must allow it but reasonable to be mute and own our ignorance—The Gentiles were latterly preferred to the Jews, not on account of merit but because they more willingly received the gospel.

St. Paul was not by any means a Predestinarian of your tenets; he did not maintain what you seem to ascertain, that he who was once obedient to the heavenly call, could never finally perish, else useless were these and such like expressions of the apostle. *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, &c.*

I am however, well convinced it is out of your power to establish your favorite tenets upon any rational grounds, and happy for Christianity this is the case, for otherwise it would soon fall to the ground. You are certainly laying the foundation of atheism tho' you are not aware of it. For what would Atheists say, do you not assert that God can do what he pleases if it do not involve a contradiction?—It involves no contradiction to say, he can save all mankind. But would it not be trifling to say he cannot save those who die in their sins; for he might have saved them from their sins by repentance and an *irresistible call* if he chose. But perhaps you may say he could not save all mankind, because he had preordained otherwise. If I ask then where is the use of preaching,



preaching, praying, and all the ordinances of religion as necessary to salvation? The answer must be still the same; "*because it was preordained that the elect should use such means*".

It was in the sixteenth century the opinion of the reformed churches, that Holy Scripture and reason were the two criterions of truth, *that contradictions cannot be the objects of faith; that all propositions which are repugnant to, and destroy each other, must be false and incredible*. But in my opinion it would be much better stated by saying, that two contradictory propositions cannot be true, one of necessity must be wrong. It is a contradiction to say that God willeth not the death of a sinner, and that he should at the same time withhold the means or the power of reforming. Perhaps it may be alledged that the doctrine of the divine decrees is a doctrine of the established church, established by the 17th article. To this I answer, that although that article affords a latitude of interpretation, as there were then many calvanistical Doctors in our Church, yet in the reign of Charles the First, the calvanistical Doctrine of Predestination was excluded, and  
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whatever latitude the 17th article might have once afforded, it *now* cannot be held as a support to that doctrine; the professors of the church of England, who held such tenets were called *calvanistical Puritans*, but it is to be hoped, that our Bishops will in future keep the church clear from such teachers.

In the fifth Century the Christian Church was troubled with the Palagians and the Semi-Palagians; the first placed too much upon the power of human nature, to perform all requisite good works; the second mixed that heresy with the doctrine of Grace, whilst ST. AUGUSTINE, and his disciples, fell into a contrary extreme, among other errors introducing the doctrine of absolute decrees.—I am far from condemning *every* person who does not think with me in renouncing such doctrine—among some of the Calvinists, this is a Church tenet; in the Church of England it is looked upon as error, if any member of this Church is tainted with it, he should not disturb the minds of others with endeavouring to cultivate it, or else he should quit that Church and join that assembly where he may be indulged in his favorite Hypothesis. Reprobation is a tenet  
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so horrid in its own nature, that were it universally the opinion of Christians, I should immediately renounce christianity—for it is impossible that an uncharitable malevolent principle could ever have been cultivated by Christ or his Apostles. In vain you argue from the fore-knowledge of God; this is a subject beyond human comprehension, it is dangerous to enter into any arguments drawn *a priori*, our capacities are not suited to the magnitude of the subject; we must be contented with what has been revealed, and understand scripture in its plain and unequivocal meaning, not rendering the language of it dubious, as when the words of Peter are quoted, declaring, that God “*is not willing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance*”. Saying, that these benevolent expressions are confined only to ANY OR ALL *elect*ed sinners.

Thus some men render the simplicity of the Gospel the subject of dispute and cavil, and have often disturbed the Church of Christ.—Such doctrine originates sometimes in an atrabilious and gloomy constitution, and in a misanthropic temper. Their pretended spirituality is but the exuberance of disgustful pride,



pride, which would feign monopolize heaven. I fear much that in the final issue there may be found many such among their votaries whose spiritual pride will consign them over to the punishment of the rebellious Angels.

*Aspiring to be gods if angels fell,*

*Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.*

Upon the whole, Sir, you seem to have indecently blended the flights of Whitfield with some of your own highly volatilized, forming a dangerous poison of too subtle a nature when administered to votaries who may have good hearts but weak heads; it often sets the brain in a blaze; the animal spirits in high agitation, causing for the moment very extraordinary sensations, are mistaken for instantaneous inspiration which shews itself by violent suspirations and awkward gestures.

It may be laid down as an axiom, that God cannot love the reprobate; it follows, that the elect cannot, or ought not, to love what is an abomination to the Lord. But we are commanded to love those that hate us; to  
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love our neighbour as our self.—If it be said that it is the elect only we are to love, it follows that we should equally know who the elect are, or otherwise we love those whom God hates, which is committing sin.—It is but a poor argument to say because we know not who the elect are; therefore lest they should be neglected we are bound to love all mankind. Can the person who mentions such a sentiment be a real charitable person? they who would do *good* unto all men but *especially to them who are of the Household of Faith*, must mean—do good to all men lest you neglect the *elect*, but especially to them you believe to be such. Men of such contracted and hypocritical souls cannot be the elect of God;—they dispense charity through mistake where they would otherwise shew a deadly hatred. How unlike the divine Author of our Being, who sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust! though he cannot be deceived for want of knowledge, he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, yet he is made the author of their destruction by an *eternal decree*: Who would be such a believer? alas! the unfortunate, and truly pitiable objects for which the Penitentiary of Dorset-Street, has been established under the auspices of a benevolent

valent and generous man, can reap but little comfort from doctrines calculated to drive them into despair, if they cannot arrive at that degree of confidence which will ascertain their heavenly call, then perhaps *sincere* repentance may be changed to *black despair*; and then what will not the preacher have to answer for? or else, having acquired the teacher's presumption, be again led captive by vice under a confidence of never falling finally.

If in any respect I may have misconceived your meaning you must impute it to yourself, for in addressing you on a sermon composed of *vulgar* repetitions, I must compare myself to a person who shoots at a swallow, whose circuitous and irregular flights might possibly evade the best aim; but presently in reply to this, something may be expected which will afford a more certain basis for future animadversion. In fact the points wherein you appear to have erred are these, and which, if brought home, entirely unfit you for a teacher in the church of England—1st. the holding an inexplicable doctrine which you stile a particular *call* from God—2d. that after such call, it is impossible to fall from God



God—3dly, that you hold the old doctrine of Geneva, concerning predestination and which that school afterwards neglected—all these being doctrines which are not now taught in the church of England.

I have no doubt but you are too well acquainted with the arguments that favor your Theory—of what has been judiciously argued against it, you seem to be ignorant, but what will answer full as well as ignorance is this—YOU HAVE A DIVINE INTERNAL CONVICTION THAT YOU ARE RIGHT—then whilst you imagine yourself possess'd with that, all argument is vain.—Yet you will still attempt to argue, and that *methodically*, or otherwise *methodistically*—under the semblance of Apostolic innocence, you confound the ignorant with disguised *Logic*, and perverted metaphysics. What an opportunity in lecturing on liberty and necessity and investigating the principles of Locke, to inculcate your own—and to send forth preachers into the church, who will again revive the doctrines of predestinarians, the contests of Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians—

farians, and all the polemic and ridiculous contests, that have at various times disturbed the world. I must tell you that the enemies of Christianity will avail themselves of such disturbance—yet you may say, why then do you interfere? my answer is, Charity—to you, by affording you an opportunity of justifying your doctrines, if misrepresented or misconceived—and to all the world—by exposing the tendency of enthusiastic preaching which disturbs mankind.—With respect to controversy in general, I am sensible it never did, nor never will be productive of good.—I mean only to bring you to an open acknowledgement or disavowel of the tenets laid to your charge; if you hold them, argument is vain.—If we believe the words of Locke, “ these men (says he,) have they say, clear light and they see: they have an awakened sense and they feel, this cannot, they are sure be disputed them. For when a man says (*or calls God to witness*) that he sees or he feels, nobody can deny it to him that he does so—in another place you know he says. “ Their minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless opinion comes to settle itself strongly upon their fancies, is an illumination

nation from the Spirit of God—and whatever odd action they find in themselves an inclination to do, *that impulse* is concluded to be a *call*, or direction from Heaven and must be obeyed; 'tis a commission from above, and they cannot err in executing it."

Therefore, if you by a written testimony avow what is laid to your charge, it will have every possible good effect; the good sense and observation of well-minded persons, without an unavailing controversy, will convince them that enthusiastic doctrine may be productive in a thousand instances, of the most dreadful consequences to society. That despair and destruction are its offspring—that immorality and wickedness are sanctioned by it—That men who may be persuaded to believe such doctrine, *may* also, not finding any experience of a miraculous call to ascertain their title to future Bliss, *may* do in many instances fall into despair, and madness—while others work themselves also into the imagination of being the very elect without the danger of ever falling finally from that state, and from the workings of imagination lose their  
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understandings, and abandoning the necessary concerns of life, leave their families to misery and wretchedness.

I am Sir, your

very Humble Servant,

July 20th, 1794.

JOHANNES CLERICUS.

F I N I S.



